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Note verbale dated 6 February 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Tonga to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour, in its capacity as the current Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, to transmit herewith a copy of the communiqué, issued at the conclusion of the Thirty-eighth Pacific Islands Forum, held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, on 16 and 17 October 2007 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations would be grateful if the present note verbale and the attached communiqué were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 117 (s) of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 6 February 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Tonga to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Thirty-eighth Pacific Islands Forum

Nuku'alofa, Tonga, 16 and 17 October 2007

Forum communiqué

1. The Thirty-eighth Pacific Islands Forum was held in Tonga from 16-17 October 2007 and was attended by Heads of State and Government of the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, and representatives of Australia, Kiribati, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands. New Caledonia and French Polynesia also attended the formal session as Associate Members and Timor-Leste, Tokelau and Wallis & Futuna as observers. The Forum Retreat was held at Vava'u, Tonga. A representative of Venezuela also attended, as a special guest of the Government of Tonga.

2. Leaders expressed their deep appreciation to the Government and people of Tonga for hosting the 2007 meeting, for the warm and generous manner in which they had been welcomed and for the arrangements made for the meetings.

Pacific Plan

3. Leaders noted that two years after its launch, considerable progress has been made in the implementation of initiatives across all four of the Pacific Plan's pillars. Challenges, however, remain. These include the maintenance of timely reporting to support ongoing assessment of the Plan's progress, and continuing human and financial capacity constraints in the implementation of some initiatives.

4. Leaders agreed on a number of key commitments in order to move the Plan forward in the next 12 months. Priority areas for attention under the Pacific Plan are listed below and at annex A.

Fisheries

5. Despite the considerable work undertaken to date to strengthen the region's management of its highly migratory fish stocks, Leaders believe urgent supplementary work is needed in specific areas. Fisheries represents one of the region's strongest drivers for sustainable economic growth. As a source of both export revenue and food security, efforts must continue to maintain regional solidarity among Forum Members in their management of these fish stocks, particularly tuna. Greater effort to foster a long-term strategic approach to ensuring these resources are effectively managed will provide enduring benefits for all Forum Member countries. This approach must include the upholding and strengthening of existing regional arrangements, agreements and conservation measures that protect this essential resource in the face of threatened stock levels and intensifying global interest, particularly from distant water fishing nations. Leaders adopted a Declaration on Pacific Fisheries Resources (attached as Annex B).

6. Leaders also welcomed with appreciation the NZ$ 5 million contribution to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community tuna tagging programme announced by New Zealand and the A$ 500,000 contribution as incentive funding to recognize effective action by Pacific Island Countries to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing announced by Australia.

Energy

7. Leaders believe there remains a need for continued high level support to address the region's energy needs and more specifically efforts to secure equitable access to reliable and affordable energy for all Forum Members. This year's Pacific Energy Ministers' Meeting provided a significant boost towards achieving this objective, in particular, commissioning work to ensure a finalized proposal for regional bulk fuel procurement for the consideration of Forum Leaders in 2008. By delivering a strong statement through their communiqué, the Ministers clearly identified the challenges and proposed mitigation strategies necessary to address the region's energy needs. In acknowledgement of the direction provided to the region by its Energy Ministers, Leaders endorsed the comprehensive implementation of the Minsters' communiqué's recommendations.

Trade and economic integration

8. Leaders acknowledged that economic growth is central to the Pacific Plan and that the integration of the region's economies presents significant opportunities to raise living standards for all Forum Members. The continuing focus on trade and economic integration has been evident with both Economic and Trade Ministers respectively continuing to work on ways to achieve success in these areas noting the importance of, for instance, labour mobility. Challenges remain, however, among them the slow pace at which regional trade agreements are being implemented. Leaders supported a continued focus on trade and economic integration to underwrite the desire to strengthen the region's economic growth.

Climate change

9. Leaders reiterated their deep concern over the serious and growing threat posed by climate change to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Pacific Island Countries, their communities, peoples and cultures. They noted that they have been calling on the international community to take concerted action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since 1990. Recent events and major international reports such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 4th Assessment Report show unequivocally that climate change is occurring and that it is very likely caused by human actions. Adaptation to climate change is now an inevitable requirement, as the Earth begins responding to greenhouse gases already emitted.

10. Leaders recognized the special concerns and interests of Forum small low lying island countries on the adverse implications of climate change, in particular sea level rise.

11. Leaders welcomed the guidance from the IPCC that it is physically and economically feasible to mitigate climate change and that with concerted international support, adaptation can also succeed. Conversely, without serious

action, the global economy and the fragile resources of the Pacific will be severely affected.

12. Leaders called on the international community to reach agreement urgently on an effective global response to deliver on the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC to avoid dangerous levels of interference with the climate system, including further commitments in the future by all major greenhouse gas emitters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and to increase and mobilize financial and technical resources to support adaptation efforts in developing countries. They recognized that climate change is a long-term international challenge and that an effective international response would require a resolute and concerted international effort, including effective action in particular by the world's major greenhouse gas emitting countries to reduce their emissions and by all countries to adapt to the changes that climate change will bring.

13. Leaders committed to actively and constructively participate in the UNFCCC meeting in Bali in December 2007, and agreed to work at that meeting towards the launch of negotiations on a comprehensive post-2012 framework to tackle climate change. To that end, Leaders welcomed the positive outcomes of the APEC 2007 meeting in Sydney in promoting more effective international responses to climate change.

Transport

14. Leaders acknowledged that transport underpins most other economic development. The provision of reliable and effective air and maritime services is reducing trade costs and decreasing the barriers that distance places on the Pacific. Eliminating unnecessary regulation allows for the freer movement of goods and services improving access to opportunity for the peoples of the Pacific. Considerable work has been undertaken to date to support the strengthening of transport services in the region, particularly in the aviation and maritime sectors. Transport's significance as a facilitator of economic growth continues however to be hampered by gaps in services and supporting infrastructure, particularly in the region's Smaller Island States. Leaders expressed appreciation for the valuable contribution of the Pacific Forum Line to regional transport development. A continued focus through regional and subregional approaches to improve shipping and aviation services, aviation liberalization, safety and security as well as the physical infrastructure that supports these sectors, remains an essential need for Forum Members. Progress in this area will also assist with tourism, the development of which remains a key economic priority for the region.

Fiji

15. Leaders:

(a) Endorsed the findings of the EPG Report following its mission to Fiji from 29 January to 1 February 2007 and the outcomes of the Forum Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting in March 2007 as an appropriate way forward to the restoration of constitutional and democratic government in Fiji;

(b) Welcomed the undertaking by the Leader of the Fiji Interim Government to the Forum Leaders today that a parliamentary election will be held in the first

quarter of 2009, and noted that he also stated to Forum Leaders that he and Republic of Fiji Military Forces will accept the outcome of the elections in the first quarter of 2009;

(c) Called on the Fiji Interim Government now to work with the Forum-Joint Working Group to produce a credible road map to those elections at that time according to the Constitution and law of Fiji, and urged the Interim Government to accord the highest priority to this task;

(d) Noted that the Interim Government is pursuing an initiative to produce a People's Charter;

(e) Expressed appreciation for the support which members of the international community have accorded to the Forum's actions in addressing the pathway to election by the first quarter of 2009;

(f) Commended the work carried out by the Fiji/Forum Joint Working Group in seeking to advance the pathway to elections by the first quarter of 2009; and

(g) Called for a meeting of the Forum Foreign Affairs Ministers in January next year to review the progress being made towards the election in the first quarter of 2009.

Regional assistance mission to Solomon Islands

16. Leaders:

(a) Commended and confirmed the continuing support of all Forum members as contributing countries to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands as an outstanding example of cooperative regionalism;

(b) Noted that, in accordance with their decisions in 2006, a consultative mechanism between the Government of Solomon Islands, RAMSI and the Pacific Islands Forum has been established, and the Task Force to review RAMSI has reported to Forum Foreign Affairs Ministers;

(c) Recognized the significant contribution that the implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force would make to the more effective operation of RAMSI;

(d) Endorsed the Task Force recommendations and commended them for the support of the Government of Solomon Islands;

(e) Agreed that urgent consultations should be pursued through the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee with the Government of Solomon Islands to seek clarification of their concerns with respect to the specific recommendations of the Task Force, and that the Standing Committee report further to Leaders at the earliest opportunity;

(f) Noted that the Review has been conducted according to the agreed Terms of Reference;

(g) Noted the decision by the Government of Solomon Islands to review the Facilitation of International Assistance Act; and

(h) Noted the importance Leaders place on the assurances given to the Forum Chair that any proposals to amend the Act will be the subject of prior consultation with RAMSI contributing countries.

Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru

17. The Forum Leaders received the report of the President of Nauru on the progress made in his country's reform and recovery programmes, congratulated the Nauru Government on its re-election; and noted the significant contributions made by the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru (PRAN) to the Government's efforts. At the same time Leaders noted the many constraints that remained, including in the enormous public debt inherited from the past, and agreed to continue supporting Nauru's efforts through PRAN and other bilateral measures.

Radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

18. Leaders recognized the special circumstances pertaining to the continued presence of radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility by the United States of America towards the people of the Marshall Islands, who have been, and continue to be, adversely affected as a direct result of nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States during its administration of the islands under the United Nations Trusteeship mandate. Leaders reiterated their call on the United States to live up to its full obligations on the provision of adequate and fair compensation and commitment to its responsibility for the safe resettlement of displaced populations, including the full and final restoration to economic productivity of all affected areas. Leaders noted the continuing dialogue between the Governments of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States, including the U.S. Congress, Senate and Administration, and agreed to submit an additional letter by the Forum Chair to the United States Government urging the United States to take action in the aftermath of Congressional hearings that established the lingering needs resulting from the U.S. testing programme. Leaders encouraged members to lend support to the Marshall Islands on this issue at the United Nations General Assembly and other international forums and to continue to assist by raising the issue with Members of the U.S. Congress.

Regional institutional framework review

19. Leaders agreed to:

(a) The inclusion of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) into Pillar 1, in order to recognize the Agency's central regional role and to provide fisheries issues with the political profile they require;

(b) The need to rationalize the functions of the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) with the work programmes of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) with the view to absorbing those functions of SOPAC into SPC and SPREP;

(c) The South Pacific Bureau for Education Assessment (SPBEA) merging into SPC; and

(d) The University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Fiji School of Medicine forming part of Pillar 3 (Education).

Country initiatives

Sports

20. In noting the importance of sports in the social, cultural and economic life of Pacific Island countries, Leaders encouraged their National Sports and Olympic Federations to work together with their counterparts in the region to develop and implement regional programmes and projects, such as has been achieved for weightlifting, that would optimally employ the limited resources available to Pacific Island countries. Leaders recognized the important role of sport as a potential tool for development and peace, within the broader social, political, cultural and economic well-being of the people of the Pacific, and the particular contribution it could make to the achievement of healthy lifestyles, to which appropriate donor funding should be targeted.

21. Leaders agreed to draw the attention of the Australian and New Zealand Rugby Unions and the International Rugby Board (IRB) to the concerns of Pacific Island countries regarding the current eligibility rules under IRB and participation by Pacific Island teams or a combined Pacific team in the Southern Hemisphere's premier Super 14 competition.

Subregional arrangements

22. The Leaders noted the concern raised over the potential risk of regional sub-groups that could complicate the institution of the Pacific Islands Forum and decided to keep the issue active for future in-depth consideration. In this connection the Leaders requested the Secretary-General to look into this issue and in particular to examine what possible practical measures may be made in the procedures and conduct of the Forum's business that could reduce the risks to the coherence and cohesiveness of the Forum and report back to the Leaders at their 2008 meeting.

Kava

23. Leaders noted the pivotal cultural significance of kava to the region. Leaders further noted the current restrictions imposed by Australia on the importation of kava for indigenous health concerns. Leaders agreed to explore with Australia innovative measures to ease these restrictions.

Health

24. Leaders welcomed with appreciation Australia's announcement of an extra A$ 20 million to tackle chronic diseases in the Pacific over the next four years.

World Heritage Committee

25. Leaders supported Vanuatu's candidature for a "reserved" seat on the World Heritage Committee.

Observership

26. Leaders invited the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission to become a Forum observer.

Post-Forum Dialogue Partner

27. Leaders welcomed Italy as the fourteenth Post-Forum Dialogue Partner and noted that it will be attending the 2007 Post-Forum Dialogue Plenary.

University of the South Pacific Charter

28. Leaders noted the proposal by the Council of the University of the South Pacific to conclude a new foundation document for the University in the form of a multilateral treaty ratified by USP Member Governments. In light of issues raised by the Leaders, the Secretariat was tasked to collect additional information and to report back to Leaders.

Papua

29. Leaders noted the intention of the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to convey the Forum discussions on Papua to the President of Indonesia.

Smaller Island States Leaders' Summit

30. Leaders noted the outcomes of the Smaller Island States Leaders' Summit.

Pacific ACP Leaders' meeting

31. Leaders noted the outcomes of the Pacific ACP Leaders' meeting.

Appreciation

32. Leaders commended the interim outgoing Chair, Right Hon Grand Chief Sir Michael T. Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and his Government for their leadership of the Forum during 2007.

Venue

33. Leaders welcomed the Government of Niue's offer to host the 2008 Forum.

Vava'u, Tonga
17 October 2007

Annex A

Vava'u decisions on the Pacific Plan

In order to advance the Pacific Plan over the next 12 months, Leaders:

International Context of the Pacific Plan

- endorsed the following amendment to the Pacific Plan:

  "The Pacific Plan reflects the region's priorities which are in line with and support the implementation of international frameworks such as the *Barbados Programme of Action* and *The Mauritius Strategy of Implementation*. As such, the Pacific Plan provides a solid platform for regional cooperation guiding collective positions through the Commission on Sustainable Development and other international forums that advocate the 'special case' of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The collective position of Pacific Islands Forum members in the international arena is a significant tool in garnering support for Pacific Island Countries individually and as a group and is recognized and valued by other United Nations members."

Fisheries

- Reaffirmed the importance of fisheries to the economies of all Pacific Forum countries, and committed themselves to promoting domestic fisheries, in particular the development of national tuna industries, in the context of a phased introduction of rights-based management arrangements supported by an appropriate management and regulatory framework;

- Committed to: maintaining regional solidarity among Forum member countries in managing the region's tuna stocks; strengthening their support for the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and other regional fisheries bodies as they intensify their efforts in applying a long-term strategic approach to Pacific fisheries, and in tuna species in particular, to ensure that these resources are effectively managed so as to provide enduring economic, social and cultural benefits; and upholding and strengthening the existing regional and national arrangements, agreements and conservation measures that protect this essential resource;

- Committed themselves and their Governments to the conservation and sustainable management of highly migratory tuna resources by: fully implementing without delay the conservation and management measures developed and endorsed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC); seeking the urgent adoption of additional measures by the WCPFC to address over-fishing of bigeye and yellowfin, including a reduction in longline catches and addressing purse seine fishing, and specific steps to reduce the catch of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin; developing and implementing, with the assistance of the FFA, a comprehensive regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) strategy; and continuing support as appropriate for the current tuna tagging initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, including the aspiration that it expand to cover the rest of the Pacific;

- Reaffirmed the Declaration on Deep Sea Bottom Trawling adopted at the 2006 Nadi Forum, welcomed the subsequent UNGA resolution 61/105 which called for strong measures to regulate and manage deep see bottom trawling, and committed to the protection of high seas biodiversity and the conservation and management of non-highly migratory fish stocks in the Pacific Ocean;

- Encouraged effective participation in the negotiations to deliver a best-practice South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization in view of the longer-term strategic significance to Members and the possible interaction of the high seas pelagic stocks with tuna resources governed by the WCPFC;

- Committed to the development and management of coastal/inshore fisheries and aquaculture to support food security, sustainable livelihoods and economic growth for current and future generations of Pacific people;

- Agreed to raise these deep concerns as a matter of urgency with Distant Water Fishing Nations and regional coastal States participating in the Post-Forum Dialogue, and urge their close cooperation with our efforts;

Energy

- Committed their Governments to implementing the Pacific Energy Ministers' Communiqué noting in particular: that energy and economic development need to be integrated and prioritized in national and regional strategic development plans; the importance of Pacific Island countries' having robust national energy policies and strategic workplans to ensure energy initiatives are progressed in line with national expectations; the importance of implementing appropriate policies and programmes to promote an optimal energy mix and energy efficiency supporting sustainable renewable energy; and that a further Ministerial meeting would be valuable. They proposed that the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) convene this in 2009 with the next Energy Officials' Meeting;

Trade and economic integration

- Reaffirmed the importance of intensified efforts in harnessing regional economic integration in view of its potential for engendering economic growth; noted the work of the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM) in advancing Pacific Plan initiatives in the areas of economic governance, including those related to strengthening regional approaches in the areas of customs, economic regulation, labour mobility and macro- and micro-economic technical assistance provision; and in this context, agreed to renew their commitment to the implementation of strengthened regional approaches;

- Noted and encouraged the pooling of resources to help alleviate underlying structural problems in delivering services such as customs and economic regulation, and reaffirmed the urgency of strengthening regional support, particularly through sustainable, long-term solutions, in the spirit of the Pacific Plan;

- Directed that current efforts be intensified in ensuring regional economic integration, including implementation of the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), which directly address the objectives of the Pacific Plan, and

stressed the importance of building on the results of the recently completed PACER impact study and gap analysis to deepen regional economic and trade cooperation, and in doing so recognized the need for thorough consultations among all relevant national and regional stakeholders on the issues involved;

- Noted in this context the consultations at the 2007 Forum Trade Ministers' meeting, and commended the Trade Ministers' decision that officials meet informally in early 2008 at a meeting hosted by New Zealand to discuss issues relating to a possible way forward under PACER. They reaffirmed the need to coordinate intensified regional trade and economic initiatives, as agreed by Trade Ministers in 2005, with other regional priorities, such as trade in services among PICTA parties;

- Endorsed, subject to funding, conducting a programme of activities in the Forum Island Countries to strengthen national and regional capacities in intellectual property rights (IPRs), including the conduct of a study on the possible establishment of a regional institution to advocate for and protect traditional knowledge and IPRs as mandated in the Pacific Plan. They noted that further work is to be undertaken to develop an effective Dispute Resolution Mechanism to deal with disputes that may arise out of PICTA;

Climate change

- Agreed that national action plans for climate change should be developed and implemented and climate change should be mainstreamed into national development planning drawing on the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change and the associated implementation plan. They directed CROP agencies to:

  - Intensify joint programming with the aim of advancing the implementation of regional frameworks and action plans, in particular, the *Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change* and the *Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action* to better assist members develop adaptation measures in response to the effects of climate change;

  - Facilitate the collection and analysis of scientific, social and economic information and traditional knowledge in a manner that will allow for appropriate and informed decision-making by members; and

  - Identify sustainable financing options at national, subregional and/or regional levels to support climate change adaptation and mitigation by members;

- Requested that the issue of climate change be considered where possible or necessary in other regional meetings such as ministerial and officials' meetings, including partnerships for water resources and disaster risk reduction;

Transport

- Reaffirmed the importance of intensified regional action to ensure effective transportation within the region, in particular, in developing improved shipping services and aviation liberalization, safety and security and thereby enhancing trade opportunities. They welcomed the work done to date in

support of developing subregional air and shipping services, noting the significant cost savings and greater efficiencies that could be secured, directed that this work continue and encouraged development partners to support the provision of reliable and effective air and maritime transport services and supporting infrastructure;

New legal infrastructure initiative

- Endorsed the inclusion of a proposed new initiative 12.9 "Legal Infrastructure Strengthening" in the Pacific Plan which, subject to funding, will commence with two scoping studies to explore modalities for strengthening the region's legal infrastructure, with the results to be reported to PPAC;

Bulk procurement of petroleum

- Noted the considerable work done to date on the regional bulk fuel procurement initiative and endorsed the Framework Agreement approach proposed to implement this initiative with a finalised package to be presented to Leaders in 2008 ready for implementation;

Tourism

- Agreed to: reconsider their current levels of support to their tourism industries and consider increasing these levels where appropriate; prioritize development of infrastructure and transport links (e.g. roads, ports, airports, aviation and shipping) in their countries to foster sustainable tourism and encourage foreign investment in their tourism industries; and encourage development of regional and subregional marketing strategies and brands for major international markets;

Information and communication technology

- Recalled their call through the Pacific Plan Digital Strategy in 2005 to find technological solutions to bridge the communication and digital divide in the Pacific islands region and:
  - In relation to Submarine Cable Technology:
    - Noted the relative absence of submarine cable technology in the Pacific islands region, and acknowledged that existing (Fiji, Papua New Guinea) and planned (American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and New Caledonia) cables in this area had been through the individual effort of each country/territory;
    - Agreed that submarine cable technology offers an ideal opportunity for enhanced regional cooperation through a "regional project" that links many countries and territories in the region and supported by a mix of private and public financing;
    - Welcomed the South Pacific Information Network (SPIN) initiative, a new trans-Pacific submarine cable network that aims to link and connect 12 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to the international telecommunication backbone with a possible operational date of

December 2008. The potential participating PICTs in SPIN from the east include: French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Niue, American Samoa, Samoa, Wallis & Futuna, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea;

- Encouraged the 12 participating PICTs to seriously consider taking up this opportunity of a "major regional project" that can enhance and unlock development potential in the 12 PICTs;
- Noted the interest raised in extending the SPIN project to other PICTs;
- Requested development partners and the private sector investors to support this major regional initiative to link 12 PICTs to the international communication backbone that will open huge economic opportunities; and
- Requested the Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to continue to facilitate this consultation process on SPIN to achieve its implementation during 2008;

• Noted the launch of the Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity Project (RICS) pilot scheme with the view to assessing the usefulness of the Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) technology in bridging the communication divide in rural and remote areas and that 100 sites are required with the next two years for it to be self-sustaining;

• Noted the potential utility of the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative and the need for respective education authorities, where appropriate, to assess the priority to be accorded to it in their countries as a tool for education and disseminating information to rural and remote communities;

Private sector development

• Recognized the value of the ongoing work in product development and capacity-building to strengthen small and medium enterprises in the region;

National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS)

• Committed to a "whole of government" and stakeholder-based approach to strengthening and developing NSDS noting the importance of operationalizing NSDS priorities with national budgetary processes;

• Called on regional agencies and development partners to jointly plan and coordinate regional assistance in support of Forum Island Countries to ensure that sectoral and cross-cutting issues are addressed and implemented through NSDS (and related) processes, with climate change and energy security as priorities for 2008;

Innovative financing for conservation

• Reaffirmed their Governments' commitments to environmental conservation and called on CROP agencies, development partners, and non-governmental organizations to assist member countries to:

  • Mainstream conservation issues into NSDS-based national planning and budgetary processes;

- Adopt stakeholder-based planning, establishment and management of conservation areas, supported by a strong understanding of economic, social and environmental benefits deriving from effective conservation;
- Identify and obtain financial resources and undertake financial planning required for the development and management of conservation areas from different sources, including national budgets, private sources and development partners; and
- Identify alternative international, regional and/or national level financing options for conservation utilizing lessons learned from different financing options, including conservation trust funds and the Global Environment Facility (GEF);

Agriculture and forestry

- Requested the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to develop a new agriculture and forestry initiative, including atoll agriculture, under the Pacific Plan's sustainable development pillar to be considered and approved, noting resource requirements and implications, by the Pacific Plan Action Committee in 2008;
- Requested SPC and the Forum Secretariat to jointly develop NSDS-based agriculture and forestry policies, plans of action and budgeting processes, in collaboration with national governments, seeking technical and financial support from regional agencies and development partners as required;

Waste management

- Committed their Governments to: integrating waste management into national development planning and budgetary processes as necessary; adopting a whole of government approach (including local governments) and working with the private sector to manage waste in an integrated manner; and identifying and accessing alternative financial resources for waste management, including the use of economic instruments (e.g. user charges);
- Called upon development partners to provide appropriate financial and technical resources to support member countries' efforts to develop integrated waste management strategies and systems;

Health

- Called for immediate action to halt and reverse the trend of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the region through multi-sectoral engagement and resource mobilization for implementation of evidence-based interventions including reprioritization of national budgets, consideration of targeted taxes and encouragement of local food production;
- Endorsed the extension of the current *Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS (2004-2008)* for a further five years to cover 2009-2013 and agreed that it be amended to emphasize current and emerging trends of the epidemic, including other Sexually Transmitted Infections;

- Agreed that subsequent to the extension of the *Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS*, a Phase 2 of the implementation plan (for 2009-2013) be developed and resources mobilized accordingly for implementation;
- Agreed to commit their Governments to implementing the five decisions by the Pacific Ministers of Health embodied in the Vanuatu Commitment;
- Noted the decisions by the Pacific Ministers of Health relating to the development of a framework for health priorities for the Pacific and funding of health initiatives in the Pacific;

Education

- Agreed that the establishment and maintenance of a National Qualifications Register be included in National Development Plans/National Education Strategic Plans of Pacific Island countries;
- Noted that some countries have established professional units to oversee the development and maintenance of their national qualifications registers;
- Agreed to consider modalities for equitably sharing the long-term costs of running a Regional Qualifications Register;

Good governance

- Supported the strengthening of accountability and integrity institutions and in particular, Auditor General and Ombudsman offices, utilizing regional and subregional approaches where possible;
- Agreed to explore ways to enhance participation, particularly by women, in decision-making processes and institutions, and in particular parliamentary processes;
- Affirmed the importance of strong leadership values, supported ongoing work in this area and called on development partners, regional organizations and civil society to support the implementation of the *Forum Principles of Accountability and Good Leadership*, and in particular through the adoption of strong leadership codes;
- Encouraged the pooling of resources and capacities to help alleviate underlying structural problems hampering the delivery of effective statistical services in the region;

Security

- Endorsed work on the applicability of the human security concept to the region with a view to developing a regional human security framework in the medium term that will provide insight into the broader security issues underlying crises and conflicts, and provide a set of tools for preventing and addressing these, including under the Biketawa Declaration;
- Directed relevant national and regional organizations and specialist Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats to strengthen the collection and exchange of law enforcement information to combat national and transnational organized crime and terrorism;

- Noted the widespread support for examining the potential for new multilateral Pacific regional arrangements patterned on the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement model for exchange of fisheries law enforcement data, cross-vesting of enforcement powers, and use of fisheries data for other law enforcement activities, and endorsed the Forum Secretariat and FFA working on modalities to take this issue forward;
- Endorsed the Pacific Urban Agenda 2 and its implementation through a regional action plan, coordinated by the Forum Secretariat and SPC, to assist member countries address the growing challenges posed by urbanization.

Annex B

The Vava'u Declaration on Pacific Fisheries Resources

"Our fish, our future"

We, the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, meeting at Vava'u in the Kingdom of Tonga:

Recognizing that our regional fisheries resources remain a key driver for sustainable economic growth in the region, especially for small island States, and that they must as a consequence be supported by responsible and effective stewardship;

Recalling the commitment by Leaders under the Pacific Plan to maximize sustainable returns from fisheries by developing an ecosystem-based fisheries management planning framework; encouraging effective fisheries development, including value-adding activities; and collaboration to ensure legislation and access frameworks are harmonized;

Also recognizing the aspirations of Pacific Islands countries to strengthen their engagement in sustainable fisheries and to maximize the flow on benefits from both domestic fisheries and foreign fishing operations in the region;

Recalling in this context our 2004 call for closer Ministerial oversight of Pacific fisheries issues;

Noting with appreciation and deep concern the report on the current state of Pacific fisheries provided to us by the current Chair of the Forum Fisheries Committee, at the request of the Committee's 64th Meeting, held at Ministerial level;

Cognizant of the significant economic opportunities which the regional fisheries resource offers to all our members, and of the comparatively low returns on the resource being achieved by countries in the region;

Seized by the scientific advice that over-fishing of two key regional tuna species — bigeye and yellowfin tuna — now places stock levels in jeopardy;

Conscious therefore of the imperative need for us to take immediate and decisive collective action to ensure that, within the next three to five years, we secure our peoples' future livelihoods, regional food security, and environmental sustainability of our seas and their ecosystems;

Hereby reaffirm the importance of fisheries to the economies of all Pacific Forum countries, and commit ourselves to:

- Promoting domestic fisheries, in particular the development of national tuna industries, in the context of a phased introduction of rights-based management arrangements supported by an appropriate management and regulatory framework;
- Development and management of coastal/inshore fisheries and aquaculture to support food security, sustainable livelihoods and economic growth for current and future generations of Pacific people;

- Maintaining regional solidarity among Forum member countries in managing the region's tuna stocks;
- Strengthening our support for the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and other regional fisheries bodies as they intensify their efforts in applying a long-term strategic approach to Pacific fisheries, and in tuna species in particular, to ensure that these resources are effectively managed so as to provide enduring economic, social and cultural benefits;
- Upholding and strengthening the existing regional and national arrangements, agreements and conservation measures that protect this essential resource; and

Consistent with our earlier calls for the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources, and with our concerns regarding food security for future generations, we further solemnly commit ourselves and our governments to the conservation and sustainable management of highly migratory tuna resources by:

- Fully implementing without delay the conservation and management measures developed and endorsed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC);
- Seeking the urgent adoption of additional measures by the WCPFC to address over-fishing of bigeye and yellowfin, including a reduction in longline catches and addressing purse seine fishing, and specific steps to reduce the catch of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin;
- Recognizing the aspirations of small island developing States to develop their domestic fisheries and calling on developed member countries of the Commission to implement measures to support such endeavours;
- Developing and implementing, with the assistance of the Forum Fisheries Agency, a comprehensive regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) strategy;
- Investigating and taking appropriate steps as a matter of priority to strengthen, simplify and give full transparency to our national fisheries governance and licensing arrangements;
- Continuing support as appropriate for the current tuna tagging initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, including the aspiration that it expand to cover the rest of the Pacific; and,
- Supporting and endorsing efforts by the Forum Fisheries Agency, supported by the Forum Secretariat, to take forward as a matter of urgency work to examine the potential for new multilateral Pacific regional arrangements patterned on the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement model for exchange of fisheries law enforcement data, cross-vesting of enforcement powers, and use of fisheries data for other law enforcement activities; and

Consistent with our previous deliberations, reaffirm the Declaration on Deep Sea Bottom Trawling adopted at the 2006 Nadi Forum and welcome the subsequent United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/105 which called for strong measures to regulate and manage deep sea bottom trawling;

Commit to the protection of high seas biodiversity and the conservation and management of non-highly migratory fish stocks in the Pacific Ocean;

Encourage effective participation in the negotiations to deliver a best-practice South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization in view of the longer-term strategic significance to Members and the possible interaction of the high seas pelagic stocks with tuna resources governed by the WCPFC;

Agree to raise these deep concerns as a matter of urgency with Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFNs) and regional coastal States participating in the Post-Forum Dialogue, and urge their close cooperation with our efforts; and,

Request the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Forum Secretariat and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission to jointly monitor progress in implementing these commitments, and reporting on this — especially progress in regional tuna management — under the Pacific Plan to Forum Fisheries Ministers and our next Leaders' Meeting for further consideration.